

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee, my name is Stacey Lackner. I am the Director of Research and Evaluation for Wayzata Public Schools. I am here to testify in favor of the Standardized Assessment Task Force, House File 3106.

I have worked in Minnesota public schools for 18 years, as a school psychologist, outcomes manager, research analyst, and for the last 8 years as Director of Research and Evaluation for Wayzata Public Schools. My role as Director includes coordinating all district and state standardized tests, training teachers and administrators how to interpret student scores, and reporting school and district results.

I support the establishment of a task force to review the current state testing system, as I believe several components of the system create an unnecessary burden on schools and districts and also provide information that does not align with the purpose of the tests, which can lead to misunderstanding and misuse of the results.

One example is the requirement to include above- and below-grade level items on the MCA. The Reading and Math MCA tests each take between 1-3 hours to complete. Including the additional items lengthens each test. These additional items are not used to determine the scaled score or student proficiency. They unnecessarily lengthen the tests.

Another example is the inclusion of student strand performance on the MCA Individual Student Report (ISR). The MCA is a unidimensional test that is not designed to be diagnostic at the individual level. Diagnostic information, such as the individual student strand results, are not reliable. MCA strand performance is only meaningful for groups of students. Including strand performance on Individual Student Reports encourages misuse of the test results.

In addition, the increasing number of parents opting their children out of MCA testing is becoming more and more of a challenge for schools. It not only impacts the interpretation of results, but has implications for logistics as well. Schools must plan to test all their students, which may include the need to hire additional staff to help proctor tests. When parents and students opt out of testing close to the testing date, schools still need to cover the cost of the additional staff. The growing number of parents opting their children out indicates that the MCA tests are less and less valued by our parents. This needs to be considered for a successful testing system.

I believe establishing an assessment task force to review our current state testing system and provide recommendations will lead to improvements that will benefit students, parents, teachers, and schools.